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What the Japanese government should do immediately to protect Children's Human Rights

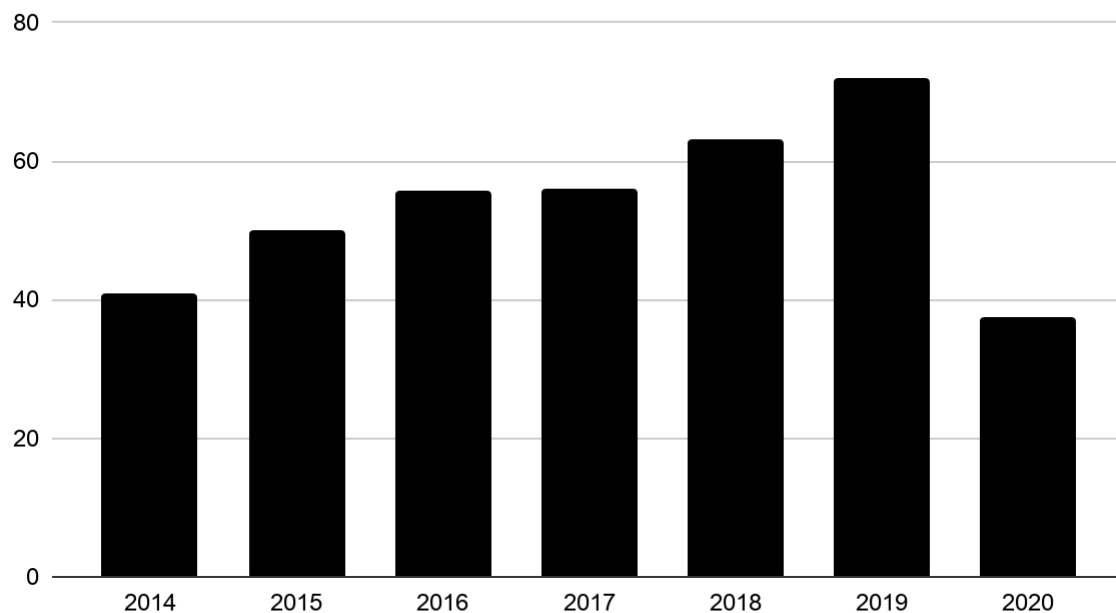
I was put into a Child Consultation Center when I was 17. From that experience, I noticed the center is too busy to deal with enormous amount of child abuse cases. The staff, who was assigned to in charge me, always looked busy. Because Child Consultation Center is suffering from a lack of social workers and such, not only to consider Japanese existing law and policy which will take several decades, but also to reform existential problem for next several years such as working environment and general impression of it is needed to prevent the violation of child's fundamental human rights from their surroundings effectively.

First of all, child abuse exercises violation to children's Fundamental Human Rights ("Jinken"). To define what is children's fundamental human rights is quite confusing, but it is clear that child abuse is one of the substance that is violating children's fundamental human rights. Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare defines child abuse as physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and mental abuse ("Jinken"), and all of them are violating children's rights. Thus, to manage child abuse cases is an effective way to prevent violation of children's human rights.

Compare to the US which made the concept of child abuse (Mandel), what is the Japanese problem? Japanese child care system is no less than the US one. The problem is a lack of human resources. For instance, compared with Yokohama City to Los Angeles County, Los Angeles county's population is 2.3 times larger than Yokohama city's one. Meanwhile, Los Angeles county's

number of social workers is 43 times larger than Yokohama city. Japanese Child Consultation Center is doing well when we focus on its system, but lack of human power is a problem that the Japanese government has to solve (Masuzawa 4-12). However, some cities are trying to change this unpleasant situation. Setagaya Ward, which is located in central Tokyo, is one of those. Setagaya Ward opened their own Child consultation center in April, 2020. That center has hired 80 workers in spite of Tokyo metropolitan Setagaya Child Consultation Center, which is the former child protection agency that had hired 46 (“Setagaya-ku”). This attempt is still in its early stage, so no one can conclude whether this is successful or not. But, according to Setagaya Ward’s report, it seems successfully working. The following figure shows the number of consultations about child abuse per each child welfare officer on Setagaya (“Jigyō”; “Setagaya-ku”)¹. It clearly shows the effectiveness of increasing the number of staff.

the number of consultations about child abuse per each child welfare officer on Setagaya



¹ Made from The outline of Tokyo Metropolitan Child Consultation Center 2020 and The progress report of managing Setagaya Ward's Child Consultation Center, October, 2020

Note : 2020 is estimated rate from previous year's cases

From the above, the importance of the number of worker is revealed. To increase that number, it is necessary to improve a work environment and impression for the Child Consultation Center. Some article says that the Child Consultation Center's working environment has enormous room to improve. Nowadays, workers who work as professional Child Consultation Center's staff are suffering overtime working because of lack of labor force (Mashima; Igusa and Tsuji). Despite their work being tough for them mentally and physically, they are often blamed by the media as just a mistake ("Tokusyuu:"; Okubo). Of course, making a mistake means the child gets hurt or dies, and such a case passes on the intense grief to the audience so the media focuses on a mistake (Mashima; Igusa and Tsuji). Besides, according to one survey, one staff said it is needed to improve measure of responding media to get better their image (Morita 109). Thus, changing the work environment and the media's way to write news reports will solve the Japanese Child Consultation Center's situation because these measures will improve its impression. More better income and an impression will encourage students to become child welfare officers. Some people argue about how hard it is to teach freshman, and it is actually important. However, without accepting more and more people, lack of labor force will never resolve.

There are a lot of problems to argue about children's rights like how far can we recognize children's self determination. However, before we do, we should reform our system by revising working conditions and using media effectively, which may save hundreds and thousands of precious lives.

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